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INTROSPECTIVE HISTORY
OF THE
ORDER OF THE ANVIL
By Francis Laurell Warren

FOREWARD

This preparation of the history of the Order of the Anvil is based solely upon my memories of ANVIL (Association of Negro Voice, Independence and Leadership) over the past forty-three (43) years. For this reason, I am referring to this initial writing as an “introspective piece” due to the fact that the content consists solely of the recall of one individual.

This writing is somewhat embarrassing for me because it is an “I did this” and “I did that” document. Very little credit and recognition is given to other ANVIL members because of two (2) basic reasons:

- My memory fails to recall the names of the many participants who served with me forty-three (43) years ago.
- Most of the Anvilites are now deceased making it impossible to refer to them for additional data.

Unfortunately, in the 1960s, only those civil rights organizations built around a charismatic leader seemed to succeed. SCLC was built around Dr. Martin Luther King; the Muslims were focused on Malcolm X; CORE activities were centered on James Farmer; and the charismatic leaders for the NAACP and the Urban League were also one person for each entity. Blacks insisted on an aggressive, productive leader before an organization was considered valid. I was the leader for ANVIL Enterprises. At the age of twenty-nine (29), Newarkers (Newark, NJ) referred to me as “A Young Man With A Dream.” ANVIL was my dream. I planned it, organized it, and implemented its program of futility.

Today, we have our Jesse Jackson, the Reverend Al. Sharpton and a few others who are still attempting to live in that 1960s charismatic leader mold. The day of this type of leadership is now over. It is obsolete, ineffective and inefficient. If today a new ANVIL were to be focused around one person, then that organization would fail. The time for intense planning, organization, implementation, centralization and decentralization of control are upon us. Effective management today is based upon a “team” concept.

While it is somewhat disturbing for me to develop an organizational history centered around myself, the facts contained herein are the truth recalled to the best of my ability. I make no excuses for the things I did but instead acknowledge that that a new day is upon us with new situations, new problems and new answers. I also realize that no matter how much things seem to change, the problems still seem to be the same.

FORWARD

As of today, my ANVIL role has been historic and that is the way it should remain, historic. The new day belongs to not one of us but to all of us.

For My Friend Stanley Miles

FIAT

**Francis Laurell Warren
October 08, 2003**

INTROSPECTIVE HISTORY THE ORDER OF THE ANVIL

By Francis L. Warren

In the early 1960s, Francis L. Warren was employed as the Industrial Relations Secretary for the Urban League of Northern New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey. While serving in this capacity, Warren was confronted with the problem of a major construction project, in downtown Newark, in which the white construction unions were denying employment of Black Americans (then referred to as Negroes). In an effort to gain admittance of Blacks in the unions, thereby qualifying them to work on the various construction jobs, Warren met with several of the different labor union leaders. Unfortunately, the meetings resulted in a status quo obstruction with neither Warren nor the unions giving ground.

Warren realized that the unions were determined to refuse all efforts to integrate their membership and all compromissorial attempts would be futile. With this thought in mind, he endeavored to find a new path to his objective. It occurred to Warren that the so-called power structure of the city (the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant corporate owners and managers) were rather amused at the effort of Blacks to enter the forbidden realm of white unionism. From a distance, they could observe, laugh and ignore the plight of the so-called Negroes and concentrate solely on the acquisition of the Black consumer dollar. It was then that Warren decided on a new approach; the involvement of a third party equipped with the power to change the present course of events.

Warren designed a comprehensive "Mutual Involvement" plan and presented it to the local chapter of CORE and a minister from one of the leading Black churches in Newark. His concept was accepted, the groundwork laid, the assault initiated. The plan called for a citywide boycott of all of the major department store in Newark. The boycott was designed to continue until the department store owners and managers agreed to act as intermediaries between the unions and the Negroes and successfully arrive at an agreement permitting Black membership in the unions as well as immediate inclusion of Blacks as employees on all of the construction sites in the city.

Warren, with the president of CORE and the minister, arranged a meeting with the corporate presidents of the two (2) largest department stores (L. Bambergers and Ohrbachs) and presented the plan, with a list of demands, to them. He expanded the plan by requiring the two (2) presidents to establish a committee consisting of

all major corporate presidents with corporations in Newark, NJ and representatives from the Black community. Warren named the committee the BICC (Business and Industrial Coordinating Committee) and in spite of their anger and frustration, the two (2) presidents agreed to cooperate if Warren would postpone immediate commencement of the boycott. Warren agreed, permitting the BICC an opportunity to exhibit its sincerity.

The organizational efforts of the two (2) presidents were quite successful. Through their efforts, the corporate participants, in the BICC, consisted of department store presidents, bank presidents, municipal gas and electric company presidents, public transportation presidents, major insurance company presidents, telephone company presidents, industrial company presidents, manufacturing company presidents, etc.

Warren was elected president of the BICC. The hatred and animosity for Warren, from the white business community, festered and after forty-three (43) years it still exists in Newark, NJ. However, the negotiatory effort of the BICC, with the unions, was quite successful. The unions were forced to capitulate. Blacks were granted membership in the unions and placed on all construction jobs throughout the city.

During his tenure as president of the BICC, Warren, resorting to hard-nosed bargaining, campaigned for the BICC to remain an active entity even though the problems with the unions had been resolved. The BICC membership agreed. Warren then proceeded to forcibly negotiate for the placement of Blacks in employment positions heretofore denied to Negroes in the city of Newark. He was successful in arranging for Blacks to be hired as:

- The first Black public transportation bus driver in Newark
- The first Black female bank cashier in Newark
- The first Black telephone company lineman in Newark
- The first Black executive for a major electric components corporation in Newark
- The first Black high level insurance company executive in Newark
- The first Black to work as an employee handling “gold” for the largest gold export/import company in America at that time, etc.

Because of pressure from the white corporate executives in the BICC, the executive director of the Urban League was forced to request

Warren's resignation from his position as the League's Industrial Relations Secretary. Warren's hard-line employment integration efforts were definitely in conflict with the League's ineffective softer policies.

Now jobless, Warren organized ANVIL (Association for Negro Voice, Independence and Leadership). Located in a storefront on the corner of 11th Street and Avon Avenue, ANVIL Enterprises rapidly grew to well over one thousand (1,000) members. The plan of the presidents of the corporations, who were members of the BICC, was to use Warren's forced resignation, from the Urban League, as an opportunity to rid them of Warren's involvement in the council. The white corporate executives were determined to convince the Black members of the BICC that Warren's membership represented Urban League participation and since the Urban League no longer employed him, his BICC membership should be revoked. With Warren gone, it was their belief that the pressure he exerted, in the area of employment equality for Blacks, would be gone with him.

They began to hold secret meetings with the Black members of the BICC and convinced them that Warren was a troublemaker and that the BICC could accomplish much more if he were no longer a member. They promised important jobs to some of the Black members if they would go along with the "dump Warren" proposal. They also promised Warren's position, as BICC president, to a well-known Black who had really wanted the position since the day the council was formed.

The Black minister held secret meetings at his church, without Warren's knowledge and gathered enough Black support to have Warren voted out of the BICC. (Ironically, the minister was the senior minister of Warren's church. Warren was not only an extremely active church member, but it was also Warren who had recruited the minister to become a part of the BICC.)

Rather than become involved in a public fight with his Black brothers, Warren quietly resigned from the BICC and focused all his efforts on building ANVIL Enterprises. Once again, whites had divided and conquered; once more, Blacks quietly sold out one of their own to the Massa. Warren's name was stricken from the minutes and the records of the BICC. For years, the BICC held an annual meeting to celebrate their founding and achievements. Warren has never been invited to attend.

(Note: You have probably noticed the frequent use of the term "Black" rather than the term "African-American" in this paper. A white person born in Africa and who is now an American citizen is an

African-American. Of the many terms; Negro, Colored, Afro-American, African-American, etc., the term "Blacks" seems to be the choice of the author because of its somewhat international significance. A Black in Paris, or Berlin, or London, or Tokyo is not an African-American. Africans living in Africa are not African Americans. Jamaicans and Haitians are not African-Americans. However, no matter where he or she may be living in this world, if their skin is black, they are considered second-class citizens. The word Black, as used here, encompasses all of them.)

In the beginning, Warren's concept for ANVIL was solely as an organization concerned with the establishment of more Black-owned businesses in the city of Newark. ANVIL formed several subsidiary companies and the organization was well on its way to making an impact as a major holding company. By the year 1963, several ANVIL members felt that ANVIL should be strongly involved in the Civil Rights struggle that was being conducted by the Honorable Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, James Farmer, A. Philip Randolph, etc. Warren resisted the change in focus. He wanted to concentrate on businesses and money for the race. He felt that the Civil Rights groups were making an impact but that other groups were also needed to make a contribution. He wanted economic freedom as well as civil and political freedom. However, the body unanimously outvoted his opposition stance. Warren reluctantly accepted the wishes of the body and ANVIL Enterprises became a Civil Rights organization.

Under his leadership, ANVIL Civil Rights goals and objectives were developed; plans and projects were scripted; and ANVIL Civil Rights marches, demonstrations and sit-ins were conducted. Newark would never be the same. ANVIL took their demonstrations to positions in front of the homes of known Newark white racists as well as to popular public and municipal sites. Warren's life was continually in danger. Within a few months as president of ANVIL, he was ambushed and exposed to small arms gunfire; almost kidnapped twice; and continually threatened and harassed. In spite of these almost daily negative confrontations, ANVIL membership continued to grow.

The group produced a monthly newspaper named the "ANVIL Journal" and also continued their fight against the social, political, and economic inadequacies forced upon Blacks in Newark. Warren and the ANVIL membership had all heard of the phrase "Power of the Press", but none of them had any idea of what it really meant until they published the ANVIL Journal. The newspaper opened many doors in the fight against racism and rapidly became one of the key tools in the "good vs. evil" struggle.

ANVIL was never a non-violent organization and was structured to meet violence with violence. Warren was strongly criticized for this stand by other Newark Civil Rights groups but he refused to alter his position. As a result, ANVIL experienced very little violence once all understood that the ANVIL membership would assume a retaliatory position in response to any destructive physical and/or mental confrontation. However, once, when picketing in front of the home of the President of the Newark City Council, someone released his Great Dane dogs and encouraged them to attack the group. The ANVIL bravado concept of "meet force with force" rapidly disappeared that day as each member selected different survival paths out of the neighborhood and took off. Warren was not the last one to leave.

Prior to the birth of each ANVIL member, one of the better residential neighborhoods in Newark was the basically Jewish middle class Weequahic section. Many Blacks dreamed of owning homes in that area. During the 1960s, the Weequahic whites began selling their homes to Blacks and moving to the suburbs. The prices for those homes were marked up to two and three times their actual value. However, Blacks bought them anyway. Once the area was well populated with Black homeowners, the Feds and the New Jersey State Government decided to build a highway through the Weequahic section. Unknown to Blacks, this plan had been on the drawing boards long before they bought the Weequahic homes. The news was not released until most of the Weequahic whites had the opportunity to sell the homes. Warren convinced the ANVIL Board to make the highway project a major resistance undertaking for ANVIL.

As the President of ANVIL, Warren attempted negotiations with Municipal, County and State governments in an effort to reach some sort of compromise with the highway implementation plan. All of his efforts were of no avail. Because of the highway project, many Blacks would lose their homes in the Weequahic section and others would suffer property devaluation.

Finally, Warren attempted to discuss the problem with the Governor of New Jersey (Governor Richard J. Hughes). The Governor refused all of his requests for a meeting. At that time, the U.S Presidential election was approaching and the Democratic selection convention was only a few months away. President John F. Kennedy was the front-runner for the Democratic Party and Governor Hughes was being considered for the Vice- President's chair. Warren was fully aware that if Kennedy and Hughes were chosen and elected, the Vice-President would become the President if anything happened to the sitting-president. Warren felt that a man honored with such a grave responsibility might be the kind of person who would treat the highway issue with consideration for the concerns of both the Black

and white races. Warren telephoned the governor; wrote the Governor; and telegraphed the Governor requesting an audience to discuss the proposed highway. The Governor still refused to meet with Warren

Out of desperation, Warren, decided to travel to the State Capitol, in Trenton, NJ, and remain there until the Governor agreed to discuss the highway project with him. Hundreds of ANVIL members requested permission to accompany Warren to Trenton but he refused their pleas and selected only two (2) Anvilites, e.g., Sylvester (Cool Breeze) Perry and John. Because of John's extremely deep religious convictions, Warren and the ANVIL members always referred to him as John the Baptist. The "Nick-name" stuck and very few remembered John's real last name. The three (3) of them were determined to see the Governor.

Once at the State Capitol, they presented the Governor's secretary with a letter from ANVIL requesting that he meet with Warren. Realizing the sensitivity of a situation that could well get out of hand, the secretary hand-carried the letter into the Governor's office and informed him that Warren and two (2) others were in the reception area. Upon receipt of the letter, the Governor sent his secretary back with a verbal message for Warren to return home and he (the Governor) would answer the letter and mail the answer to him in the near future. Warren replied that he looked forward to receiving the letter, however, the Governor need not mail it for whenever it was ready, the secretary could bring it to the front steps of the capitol, for that is where the three of them would be.

Warren and the two other ANVIL members then retired to the front steps of the Capitol sat down and began a hunger and water strike that was planned to last until the Governor agreed to see them. The response time allocated to the Governor was confined to how long Warren, Sylvester and John could live without food and water. Some predicted that without the water, dehydration would take place in about three (3) days, possibly causing death. Still, Governor Hughes refused to see them and the battle began.

A local Trenton 24-hour radio talk show heard about the ANVIL hunger/water and opened its show to telephone calls and opinions on what was happening. By the second night, as a result of the day and night reporting of the radio show, the City was in an uproar with Blacks in favor of what ANVIL was doing and whites vehemently opposed. Gangs of white racists began to harass the three ANVIL members. They drove by the Capitol steps in convertibles and threw

bottles, stones, rocks and firecrackers at them through-out-the night. The group was not afforded any police protection.

By the third day, word of the attacks permeated the Trenton Black community. As a result, thousands of Black Trentonians took off from work and filled the streets in front of the Capitol, determined to protect the ANVIL representatives. By now, the ANVIL team was too weak to sit on the steps. The Trentonians moved them within a few feet of the Capitol entrance and provided blankets for them to lie on.

Early that morning, the State Police arrived and forcibly removed John to a nearby hospital. His dehydration level had reached a dangerous point. At the hospital, John was hidden within a maze of intravenous tubing. He was delirious. Approximately two hours after he had been admitted to the hospital, John freed himself from the IV tubes, climbed out of a second story window, and walked back to the Capitol to lie beside Warren and Perry.

By now, the activities of the ANVIL group were receiving national newspaper coverage. Because of the negative headlines in the newspapers, the Democratic Party became concerned over the possible adverse affect such publicity might have on the national image of their potential vice presidential candidate. The Democrats sent in a team, from Party Headquarters, to investigate the situation and determine what their future options might be. The Governor had been told that Warren was weakening and could be near death. However, the Governor maintained that Warren and the others had to be secretly eating food and drinking water. He refused to believe that the any Black was willing to die for what he or she believed in and he insisted that there was really nothing to worry about.

The city was besieged with newspaper reporters and, in a press conference with the Governor, they requested that the Governor have his own doctor examine Warren and return with his prognosis. Reluctantly, the Governor agreed and his physician went outside to conduct the examination of Warren's vital signs. The crowd refused to let him near the three ANVIL members and the State Troopers were helpless to do anything about it. By now, close to a thousand ANVIL members had arrived from Newark. Warren's Executive Assistant, Frances Johnson, convinced the crowd to permit the doctor to examine the three (3) men. Upon completion of the examinations, the doctor informed the Governor that Warren had about two (2) hours to live and the other two (2) members would not survive the remainder of the day. In front of the Party investigators and the reporters, the Governor alleged response was "Let the Niggers die."

Approximately 45 minutes later, Warren's heart stopped beating and the nearest ANVIL members informed the crowd that he was dead. Pandemonium filled the air. A beautician, who was also a register nurse, had closed her beauty shop to attend the gathering at the Capitol. She rushed forth and began beating on Warren's chest and pressing down on his rib cage. The crowd became quiet and still as she worked. She was determined to revive him and she assumed a pace that almost seemed impossible for a human being. God was with her and she succeeded. Warren began breathing again and his pulse, although faint, was there and the nurse announced to the crowd that he was alive. The dreaded moment had passed.

At that point, the Governor agreed to a meeting with ANVIL as soon as Warren's health permitted it. An ANVIL caravan of cars rapidly proceeded back to Newark in order to have the team examined by a doctor. Warren was taken directly to Dr. Penderhughes, a well-known Black cardiologist whose office was in Montclair, NJ, a suburb of Newark. After a thorough examination, the cardiologist reported that he could not believe what he had found. Warren's heart was in perfect condition with no evidence that any type of heart failure had occurred. Warren was in excellent. In fact, the medical reports from all of the doctors, who examined the ANVIL team, were excellent. It was as if nothing medically negative had ever happened to any of them. Truly, God was with them every step of the way.

As for Governor Hughes, the negative coverage of the entire situation, including his racist comments, resulted in the Democratic Party removing his name from the ballot for Vice-President of the United States and replaced it with Lyndon Johnson. Kennedy and Johnson not only won the Democracy candidacy, they were elected President and Vice-President of the U.S. When Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson became President; a position that would have gone to the former Governor of the State of New Jersey had it not been for the Association of Negro Voice, Independence and Leadership. "Vengeance is mine" saith the Lord. During the entire three (3) days in Trenton, the members of the ANVIL team were neither hungry, nor thirsty. One can only say, "Glory be to God."

The State put the highway project hold but ANVIL did not drop the fight. Warren, with the assistance of a Pro-Bono white Jewish lawyer, attempted to have the Black homeowners put their mortgage payments and real estate taxes in escrow at a major bank in Newark. The Black homeowners, fearing that they would lose their homes, refused to do so. Years later, many of them stated that they wished they had listened to ANVIL.

For two (2) more years, Warren remained as the non-salaried president of ANVIL. Assisted by a strong staff of dedicated people, they fought and won many battles for their people. People like Warren's Executive Assistant, Frances Johnson; Vice-President, Mike Flanagan; Bob Mosley, Harold Fort, Sylvester Perry and others, gave their all in the name of economic and political freedom for Blacks. In 1965, due to overwork, stress and exhaustion, Warren's doctors insisted that he give up his role as president of ANVIL. Physically depleted, Warren, from his bed, at the insistence of the concerned ANVIL staff, resigned. Mike Flanagan became president. Warren eventually moved to Washington, DC, taking a position with the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In 1966, ANVIL disbanded and no more was heard of it until Warren revived it in New Orleans, LA, in 1983, 17 years later. It was in New Orleans that Warren designed the ANVIL symbol, logo, and flag. The Logo consisted of an anvil, a wheat spear, a cotton spear, the continent of Africa and three drops of blood. All positioned as follows:

- The continent of Africa superimposed on a background of three (3) red, black and green stripes
- A black anvil superimposed on the continent of Africa
- A wheat spear and a cotton spear diagonally crossed behind the continent of Africa
- Three drops of red blood on the face of the logo

The logo/symbol was surrounded with a border of gold superimposed on the red, black and green horizontally striped flag. A fringe of gold cords was added around the edges of the flag. The meaning of the symbol was as follows:

- A. The Anvil: The Anvil represented the strength of the Black race. The anvil is an iron or steel block on which metal objects are hammered into shape. The Anvil is Black. It is designed to take punishment and not break. After over 488 years of discrimination, bigotry, slavery, hatred and the worse kinds of physical and mental punishments, the African-American Black did not break and, like the Anvil, will not break. Some of the greatest early inventions were forged on the Anvil. The Order of the Anvil was designed to forge economic and political freedoms on an anvil of truth, determination and faith in God. FIAT!

- B. The Cotton Spear:** Cotton represents one of the main products the Black slave was required to cultivate. They worked from sun up to sun down, growing and harvesting cotton. Many slaves died in the cotton fields or as a result from working in them. The Cotton Spear represents Denmark Vesey. Vesey, 55 years old, organized a slave rebellion that was to take place on June 16, 1822. The rebellion failed as a result of betrayal by other Blacks who revealed the plan to their white masters. Vesey was hanged with four (4) other Blacks on July 2, 1822. After his death, more than thirty (30) other Blacks were executed.
- C. The Wheat Spear:** Wheat, as well as tobacco, was another product that required a great deal of slave labor. The Black slaves toiled in the wheat fields until there was no other life for them. The Wheat Spear represents Nat Turner. Turner, 30 years old, was also an organizer of a slave rebellion. On August 21, 1831, Turner, along with seven (7) other slaves, murdered his master and all of his master's family. The number of slaves, who supported Turner, increased to about eighty (80). Together they were responsible for the killing of over seventy (70) whites within a forty-eight (48) hour period. Six (6) weeks later, Turner was captured. He was hanged on November 11, 1831, along with sixteen (16) of his accomplices.
- D. The continent of Africa:** Africa is the second largest continent in the world (11,677, 240 square miles). African people make up 10% of the world's population. It is divided into more than 50 nations and further fragmented into numerous ethnic and linguistic groups. Black African-Americans came from sub-Saharan Africa. Black Africans have been in the Americas since the early 16th century when Spanish planters began to transport them from Africa to the West Indies as slaves. The first Africans brought to the North American mainland came to Virginia in 1619. African slavery became the foundation of the southern agrarian economy. Africa is the motherland of African-American Blacks. It is our true home even though our African brothers and sisters feel superior to us and would rather deal with whites than their Black American brother or sister.
- E. The Three Drops of Blood:** The Three Drops of Blood represent:
- The passage of the slaves on the ships from Africa to America and their pain, suffering and demise

- Death upon landing in America resulting from the physical and mental horrors experienced during the voyage to America
- The torture, pain, distress, injury, harm, punishment and death, at the plantations, as slaves

The book has not been completely closed on ANVIL. Warren, who really never did believe in pickets, sit-ins, hunger strikes and other types of demonstrations, would love to see a revival of ANVIL. His interests are still centered on the original ANVIL goal of economic freedom through business development; ANVIL as it was initially designed; ANVIL without a Civil Rights component. In his heart he cannot forget that in spite of all of the ANVIL so-called Civil Rights efforts, the highway was still built. To Warren, commerce is the driving force for prosperity. His belief is that ANVIL needs to create a network of Black millionaires around the world. A closely-knit system of affluent brothers and sisters dedicated to working together. It is Warren's belief that knowledge and money, together, can lead to the ability to develop and implement power plans.

There is:

- No language to communicate the problems we face
- No vision to outline the future towards which we should strive
- No program to help accelerate and make easier the transition

Black African-Americans must develop a metaphysical presuppositional mind; a mind that dwells above both reality and fiction; a mind that leads us to the Promised Land.